

**January 2007**  
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## **PREPARING FOR THE 2007 GA LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

Each July, Advocates from all over the state of Georgia gather at Kennesaw State University to discuss the potential issues that impact the lives of Georgia's seniors. This past July, of the 24 issues formally presented for consideration by advocates from all over the state, the issues listed below were selected to be priorities during the 2007 Georgia legislative session. Please take a few minutes to review them—and let your legislators know how you feel about these issues.

- **Rename and restructure the Division of Aging Services** that is currently part of the Department of Human Resources **into a separate Department of Aging** as the hub of identifying opportunities to utilize the talent of older adults as well as to create and administer programs and services to meet their needs. By 2025, the number of Georgians over age 65 will increase 77%. Just as children need the Department of Juvenile Justice to focus on their needs, so seniors need a Department of Aging to focus on our needs.
- **Patient Safety** legislation will improve the safety of health care services in doctors' offices, hospitals, and nursing homes—and will help to ensure that, for the 3.5% of Georgia's doctors who are responsible for almost half of the medical malpractice payouts to victims in Georgia by:
  - Opening the medical disciplinary process to allow individuals who file a complaint to attend and testify at disciplinary hearings conducted by the state medical board;
  - Including the consumer voice on the Composite State Board of Medical Examiners by adding three more members with no professional ties to the health care industry;
  - Requiring the Department of Human Resources to post on its web site all adverse actions, deficiencies, findings and penalties the department imposes on health care providers; and
  - Establish a process for a public reporting system of all adverse incidents and infection rates at state licensed health care facilities.
- **Funding for Home and Community Based Services**—requesting funding of
  - \$3,000,000 for Community Care Services Program (CCSP) permitting those aging consumers and consumers with disabilities eligible for nursing home care, but currently on a waiting list for services such as adult day health, living services, emergency response services, and out-of-home respite care the option of receiving community-based Medicaid services in their homes at a cost of less than \$10,000 per person per year rather than in a nursing home at a cost of \$48,000+ per person per year; and
  - \$4,000,000 for non-Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) permitting people age 60+ years in the greatest social and economic need to receive in-home services such as home delivered meals, transportation, respite care, adult day care, homemaker services, and minor home repairs. Often, these services provide support to adult caregivers providing care to persons with Alzheimer's disease, other dementias, or chronic health conditions, and grandparents caring for their grandchildren—the goal to enable them to remain at home and manage their care, promoting health, independence and self-reliance. This money would allow an additional 2,000 people currently on the waiting list to receive the at-home services, averaging \$2,000 per client, vs. \$48,000+ for nursing home care.
- **Funding for licensure of Adult Day Services** would fund the 2003 HB318 that requires the Department of Human Resources to promulgate, implement, and enforce Adult Day Center licensing requirements—this cannot be done without the funding necessary to hire the personnel, develop rules and regulations for implementation and on-going enforcement. There are 131 known adult day centers in GA. They must be licensed to protect at-risk adults, including the elderly, by appropriating \$400,000 to:
  - Ensure that adult day centers meet basic requirements such as safety, proper nutrition, staff training and competency, and appropriate activities;

- Assist in identifying and regulating substandard adult day centers which are currently operating but are not known to authorities within the aging services network; and
  - Enable GA to protect its vulnerable adults by implementing the adult day care licensing law.
  - **Georgia is the only southeastern state that does not currently regulate Adult Day Centers.**
- **Support for Children in Grandparent Care** would dedicate \$7,789,000 to
    - provide financial support for 1,500 children equal to 80% of that received by foster children—these children would not have to be adopted nor would the state have to assume custody—instead, grandparents (often age 65+) who willingly step up to the plate to care for their family members would receive the assistance needed to care for these children; and
    - Create a Power of Attorney for a minor child, giving parents a means to grant authority to the grandparent and/or great-grandparent to act on behalf of the child without requiring a court proceeding, thereby saving lengthy court processes and costs.

Other issues with major impact on the lives of seniors will likely surface as well. Rest assured that the *Senior-To-Senior* Advocacy Team will stay on top of them and keep you informed through the Senior Services website, the *Bulletin*, and through the Centers.

**We're always looking for new Advocates—the only requirement to become an Advocate is to have a willing spirit and be willing to make an average time commitment of 6 – 8 hours per month. We'll provide you with in-service and on-the-job training so that you can speak for those who have no voice or who are uncomfortable speaking for themselves. You might also like to become part of an "Advocacy Tree" to keep informed and help others to keep informed about issues impacting seniors—if so, please call the *Senior-To-Senior* Advocacy Team at (770) 528-1446 for more information on how you can become actively involved.**